



It's Never Real

**virtual**

422 37 29

Chapter 1 by Fatty2By4

Four years. I can't believe it's been four years since we've been sucked into this wasteland we're supposed to call home. Four years since that machine stole our....our souls or whatever it was and put it in this virtual word. Course I guess it could be worse, I could be looking down the barrel of a shotgun held by my best friend, outside, five minutes before the next solar flare.

Oh wait.

That's happening too.

Chapter 2 by DANDAN THE DANDAN ~ anyone still remember me?



"Mike! Get in here! And run, or you'll be next on the list!"

"Okay hold on, the rabbit's gonna run if I don't!"

"Is an extra meat worth your life?"

"We're gonna respawn at The Center anyway"

Life is like a game now.

Follow the roles or live like

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That's the only rule. We were armed with a tier 1 pistol and 6 bullets when we first got here, but next time we die, we bring nothing. And what's worst? Campers.

They camp at The Center to kill the ones that just respawned for extra experience for achieving special perks. Farmers like us grow Bit Plants and trade them for money at Shops. There are 5 of them at all 5 corners of the pentagon-shaped map. We can see the whole area when we respawn.

"Mike come here or you will die!"

"Yea, yea. Fine." He finally agreed to come back to the house. Any structures protect against the solar flares. Bit Plants survive them too, but if it is exposed more than 5 times, it turns into a monster spawned so we have to be careful.

Mike finally entered the door.

"About time." I scolded him.

"I still got 5 lives and if I kill one more mob, I'll level up."

I pointed behind him. The solar flare has just started. We only have 10 lives. If we run out, we have a 50, 50 chance of either being transferred to Hell, or just start over with no memories.

"Luckily I brought that flare roof so we still can work." Mike cheered.

Chapter 3 by alpha_ryan



Even under the flare roof, the light entering from the sides burns my eyes. Not in the same painful way as when we had human bodies. It's different... like my virtual body knows the sun could so easily turn it to dust, and cowers in fear without me having a say in the matter. There's no getting used to it. I hate these flares.

Farmers are low on the chain, and don't attract much attention. The other roles can't even

touch Bit Plants; they'd just pass right through them. So they generally leave us alone. Every once in a while you get the rare p... and just wants to cause chaos on their way out. They co... of... the flare roof. It's not that sturdy and takes time to...

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But Mike's our muscle. He's always been great at shooting; a hidden trait I suppose. It's not always obvious when a person receives a trait, so I can't say for sure. But Mike, he takes too many risks. Sure he levels up faster than Sarah and me combined, but he's also lost half his lives in the process. What good is leveling up if you're just going to forget it all.

This life is fake, but I won't forget who I was, and that makes it real enough for now. I'm the responsible one. I'll stay alive. I'm not even sure we age in this world. Maybe if I'm careful, I'll live forever. I don't know that I want that either. But for now, I'll protect my lives as though I only had one.

Mike gives me a good amount of his loot for safe keeping. That way it's not lost when he inevitably dies again. I don't mind being a walking closet. He doesn't mind being a guard dog. Though I'd bet anything he's thinking of a different metaphor for himself. I guess I actually like the idea of being a closet more than being a farmer. At least I got to choose the former. Being a farmer is just something I have to do.

"The flare is ending." Mike said with a smile. The rabbit would be long gone, but surely he would be back on the hunt as soon as the flare lifted.

Chapter 4 by Zweebie



Of course, the flares aren't the only problem.

There are people out there, although people may not be the right word for it.

We've only seen their shadows as they stumble and groan, their hideous voices making our skin crawl.

We don't know what they do.

Where they come from.

Only that if we see them, with their terrible groans and their ragged skin, we have to hide

We can't run. Clara, she's dead. [See more of Story Wars](#)

We'll never know what ha

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Maybe the - the creators, or whatever we've decided to call them - made these monsters. Maybe they were once creatures like us. We'll never know.

I hope I'll never know.

Chapter 5 by LethalPianist



"Mike!" I yelled out at him. It's after the solar flare, but that doesn't mean it's out there. It's never safe around here.

"It's fine!" Mike yelled back at me, drawing the shotgun he had saved up for all these years and loaded it up with shells. He started running into the forest, no doubt in search of that rabbit again.

"Score!" Mike yelled, a ways ahead of me. "Now...DIE!" It's not until he fired the shot that I realized something had to be wrong. Rabbits don't survive solar flares.

Not normal rabbits, at any rate.

Another shot rang out, and Mike crumpled in front of me. A man dressed in a white fur coat was kneeling where the rabbit was just a moment ago, the barrel of his rifle still smoking.

I cursed silently. Beast hunters. They were several classes up from us Farmers, and normally hunted in the forest. This one probably had a trait that allowed him to transform into an animal.

"Damn, that's some nice trait you got there." The man's voice sounded dusty, as if it wasn't used very often. "Sharpshooting. That'd go for a lot on the market."

I panic inside as I hastily draw my rifle. This guy was a Trait hunter, one of the unofficial classes that killed people to kill their traits. Unlike normal death, trait extraction is excruciating painful and long.

"Now I wouldn't try that, farmer scum." He looked me in the eye. My insides went cold. "Be a good boy and let me kill you."

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I closed my eyes as a second shot rang out.

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Chapter 6 by LethalPianist



When the expected pain didn't come, I opened my eyes.

A blue sphere surrounded me, and I could see the bullet hovering outside of it, inches from my face.

System Message: Trait Unlocked-Auric Shield.

"What the-" The bounty hunter cried out. He fired a second shot at me, and this time I saw the bullet slow down and stop in front of my shield.

This is my chance! I thought. I drew my rifle and took careful aim. I fired.

System Message: Class Promotion-Vigilante.

Chapter 7 by Dan Ramazan



I did not miss. I shot this bastard. The bullet hit right between his eyes. But hunter did not fall. And there was no blood. He just stood there and looked at me. No emotion. No surprise, no anger, no resentment. He seemed frozen. Then his body went ripples. It was like a wave, splitting his body into pixels. And again. And further. Where the wave passed, his body looked like a multicolored fog. Until there was nothing left but the fog. The same thing happened with Mike's body. And then their traces vanished.

System Message: Congratulations, sir. You have reached the goal.

"What? What goal?" I was shocked. I never received more than two system messages in a row. And system never calls you "sir".

System Message: Sir, you created a simulation of survival in a post-apocalyptic world. You successfully completed it. You took 4 years, 1 day, 7 hours 42 minutes and 46 seconds to solve this problem. You got the assistance of two friendly character simulations. Would you like to speak with someone of the created characters before the destruction of the simulation?

"I do not ... Mike is a character? Wait ..."

System Message: Call a friendly character simulation Mike.

First there was the fog. Then it began to unravel. The features of Mike. I've seen how other players respawned. It may shock, but it's surprisingly comforting. But were there any players? Was it

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Chapter 8 by Dan Ramazan



When Mike finally emerged in front of me, he silently sat on the grass and stared at the sky.

"Shouldn't you say something?" I asked in surprise.

"I'll wait until your real memories are unlocked, buddy. Then we'll talk," Mike was still sitting back to me.

A sharp pain squeezed my temples. I gasped and fell on knees. Now I remembered all 65 years of my gloomy life. However, the most terrible of them were the last four. I spent all these years in the simulation. When I finally straightened up, Mike was sitting in front of me staring at my face.

"Are you okay?" Waiting for my nod, he continued, "Well, here we are. Now, you want to leave. No, I won't stop you. You've spent five years on this. That was the whole point of therapy. To bring you back to life."

"You look upset. Are you afraid that when I'm gone, you'll be deleted?" I asked quietly.

"Of course, I'm afraid. I am afraid of death, as well as you. I'm not even Mike, buddy. Your brother died five years ago. He was your only family, so you escaped here. I'm just the man you saw in Mike. All the characters here are made the same way. That hunter – didn't you recognize him? He's your math teacher. "

I looked at him, stunned by this information. Then his lips trembled, and we burst out laughing.

"So what have you decided, buddy?" Mike's face became serious.

I could not look into his eyes so I looked down at his boots, and slowly began, "I do not know. I felt awful. And I still do, but now I know that escaping like that is not an option." I looked in Mike's eyes, "I think I must go."

Mike said nothing. He just nodded and started to turn into a fog.

That's all. This chapter of my life is over. Now I need to rebuild it. It will be a completely new story. It will be short and not necessarily happy, and certainly not as interesting as this one. But it will not be staged. This story will be real, unique and mine. And this is important.

"System, shut down the simulation."

the end

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